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1968, a year of Viet Nam people's persevering struggles on diplomatic front

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PLAF attack against an enemy position

SOUTH VIET NAM

★ 6 enemy companies destroyed or decimated and 43 vehicles wrecked in 4 ambushes North of Saigon and 4 other companies put out of action in other sectors.

★ Enemy bases and positions pounded all over the country. At least 34 helicopters destroyed on the ground in the Mekong Delta.

★ 22 U.S. vessels (including several 10,000—12,000-ton freighters) sunk or damaged on waterways.

★ Attacks and popular uprisings in occupied areas of My Tho province on the night of Jan. 10.

DRVN and SWEDEN ESTABLISH DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

The Ministries for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam and the Kingdom of Sweden have exchanged documents on the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Full text of the documents reads:

Stockholm, January 10, 1969

Your Excellency

Mr. NGUYEN DUY TRINH,
Minister of Foreign Affairs
HANOI

Mr. Minister,

On behalf of the Swedish Government, I have the honour to propose to you that diplomatic relations be established between Sweden and the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam.

The Swedish Government expresses the hope that this proposal would be acceptable to your Government and that the relations between our two countries would develop favourably in the economic and cultural fields as well as other domains in the interests of our two peoples and peace in the world.

TORSTEN NILSSON
Minister for Foreign Affairs

Hanoi, January 11, 1969

His Excellency

Mr. TORSTEN NILSSON,
Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Kingdom of Sweden
STOCKHOLM

Excellency,

With my thanks, I warmly welcome Your message anncouncing that the Swedish Government has decided to establish diplomatic relations between Sweden and the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam.

I have the honour to inform You that the Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, desirous of strengthening the relations of friendship between the two peoples, has agreed to establish diplomatic relations between our two countries.

Our people and our Government are firmly convinced that the establishment of these diplomatic relations will help strengthen further the solidarity, friendship and cooperation between Viet Nam and Sweden and will make a positive contribution to the safeguarding of world peace.

I take this opportunity to convey to Your Excellency and the Swedish people the warmest congratulations from our people and our Government.

NGUYEN DUY TRINH
Minister for Foreign Affairs

(See page 6: an article on Swedish people's movement in support of Viet Nam)

1968, A YEAR OF VIET NAM PEOPLE'S PERSEVERING STRUGGLES ON DIPLOMATIC FRONT

(continued from last issue)

ON the initiative of the DRVN Government, the DRVN - U.S. official talks began in Paris on May 14, 1968. In agreeing to the DRVN May 3 proposal, the U.S. Government accepted *ipso facto* that the principal objective of the talks was "to ascertain the unconditional cessation of the bombing raids and all other acts of war against the DRVN, then discuss other problems of concern to the two sides".

It took however nearly 6 months - or 28 sessions of the Paris talks - to the U.S. to finally meet the legitimate demand of the Vietnamese, American and world peoples: it is only on Oct. 31, 1968, that the U.S. President ordered the unconditional ending of air, naval and artillery bombardment of the whole territory of the DRVN.

SIX MONTHS SQUANDERED

WHAT could have been done by the American rulers right from beginning of May 1968 was done by them only in November. These six months squandered by them certainly brought a great deal of mourning and sufferings to the North Vietnamese people, especially to those living in the "panhandle", but they also caused the U.S. serious losses in terms of planes and pilots, and since they contributed to postpone the settlement of the Viet Nam problem and prolong the war, they involved much more considerable losses in U.S. lives an l dollars in South Viet Nam.

In these six months, what actually occurred in Paris (Kleber Street, in the U.S., in Viet Nam and the world?

The unfolding of the Paris talks would permit future historians to conclude that U.S. diplomats were to be rated past masters in dilatory tactics.

Firstly, a large part of the total 28 sessions were devoted by them to elaborations on such things as the future of South-east Asia under the magic wand of "American aid", the situation in Laos where U.S. aggressors posed as defenders of Laos' independence and neutrality..., in short all subjects which had nothing to do with the real objective of the talks.

Other sessions were used by Mr. Harriman and Mr. Vance to distort historical facts and misrepresent the situation in Viet Nam. They harped on these two favourite themes of U.S. propaganda: the so-called aggression of South Viet Nam by North Viet Nam and U.S. commitments to the Saigon administration. But the DRVN representative had no difficulty in establishing the truth and in putting his interlocutors to confusion: hasn't history proved that U.S. aggression did not date back only from the years 1954-1955, but much earlier, especially during our First National Resistance when the U.S. imperialists sided with the colonialist aggressors and the present puppets in Saigon were but obedient servants of French imperialism? The traitors' regime installed by the U.S. was so anti-popular and brutal that the 14 million South Vietnamese found no other way out than to rise up in arms under the NFL banner to defend their legitimate rights and save their very existence. As the war was carried by the Americans to both parts of Viet Nam, it was natural that the whole Vietnamese people from North to South had to stand up to bar the way to the invaders. As Premier Pham Van Dong declared at the May session of our National Assembly, "Our entire people, 31 million as one man, are resolved to fight and defeat the enemy and wherever the enemy is, all the Vietnamese have the right to go there and fight him. That is the sacred right to sel-defence of our people which has won deep sympathy and firm support from world peoples".

The U.S. representatives to the Paris talks liked to speak of a "return to the 1954 Geneva Agreements", and particularly of the "restoration of the DMZ to its original status". But as Minister Xuan Thuy pointed out, this was only aimed at a more effective sabotage of the Geneva Agreements and continued aggression. They deliberately warped the Agreements and narrowed it down to the "Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities" which was designed to solve short-term problems arising from the ending of the French colonialists' war of aggression. They moreover referred only to the status of the DMZ and left out other clauses of the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities, especially those prohibiting the introduction of foreign troops and establishment of foreign bases. They insisted on the restoration of the DMZ to its original status with a view to making people believe that South Viet Nam was victim of an aggression by North Viet Nam and not by the U.S. They ignored the main document constituting the Geneva Agreements — that is, the Final Declaration which vindicated the fundamental national rights of the Vietnamese people. This voluntary omission is understandable since the U.S. imperialists have always been the saboteurs of Viet Nam's independence and sovereignty.

As for the unconditional cessation of the bombing raids and other acts of war against the DRVN, the American diplomats did everything to shirk it, by clinging to their outdated theories of "reciprocity" and "mutual de-escalation". A whole series of formulae was used by them to this end:

"We are prepared to discuss the cessation of bombing concurrently with other relevant problems";

"We would like to know what will happen after the bombing stops";

"We hope that the DRVN will give us reason to believe that it is prepared to join with us in de-escalating the war and moving seriously towards peace".

Minister Xuan Thuy had to stress that the DRVN position on this subject was unshakable: since the U.S. had committed a crime against an independent and sovereign country, they should put an end to it without asking for any ransom in return. "Reciprocity" was out of question because the DRVN had never sent any aircraft of its own to bomb U.S. territory. As regards the discussion of problems raised by the U.S. representatives, they could take place only after the unconditional ending of the bombing raids and all other acts of war.

Thus, as a result of U.S. bad faith and obstinacy, the Paris talks markel time for several months. From time to time, however, rumours were spread by the U.S. side, in an attempt to generate an optimistic climate around the talks. Now the Washington representatives asserted that there were "similarities in both sides' views", now the U.S. propaganda machine spoke of "rays of hope", "straws in the wind" and even "progress in Paris" etc... When all these tall stories received a formal denial from DRVN representatives, Mr. Harriman started proposing that both sides' statements at the sessions should not be made public. One must abstain from propaganda work, he said. Mr. Xuan Thuy's reply was that the U.S. had been indulging in so much propaganda to deceive the American and world peoples that the DRVN should keep the public abreast with facts.

A VICTORY OF STRATEGIC VALUE

THE special care taken by the representatives of the Johnson Administration in misrepresenting the real state of the Paris talks can be easily understood if one keeps in mind that the presidential electioneering was in full swing in the U.S. at that moment.

The Viet Nam problem topped the bill in the campaign. Criticisms were heard from all quarters against Johnson's policy of continuing an irremediably doomed war. In such circumstances, U.S. official propaganda had to assure public opinion that the Johnson team was working zealously — and with success — for peace, while in Viet Nam things were visibly improving for the U.S.: the Viet Cong was beaten, and the Saigon Army's morale reached an all-time high!

In fact, desperate efforts were being exerted in Viet Nam by the aggressors in the hope of securing a position of strength at the conference table. In North Viet Nam, U.S bombings were concentrated in the four Southern provinces, and the number of U.S. air sorties there surpassed the total of missions flown over the whole territory of North Viet Nam prior to March 31, 1968. In South Viet Nam, B52s carried their carpet-bombings in the immediate vicinity of Saigon, "mopping-up" operations were intensified and so was pressganging into the puppet army.

All these efforts were incapable of saving the aggressors from ever more catastrophic setbacks. On June 25, 1968 the 3000th U.S. planes was knocked down in North Viet Nam; on Oct. 9, it was the turn of the 3200th. In the South, Khe Sanh Base which U.S. chiefs of staff had given a written pledge to Johnson to defend at all costs, was hurriedly evacuated on July 9, 1968. The offensives and uprisings staged by the South Vietnamese people, far from abating, gained in intensity, and in spite of all security precautions taken by the enemy, the waves of attacks in May, then in August 1968, were serious warnings given to Washington that Saigon, the "last strategic hamlet", would one day slip out of U.S.-puppet control. The U.S. "search-and-destroy" strategy was given up, and Westmoreland's successor had to apply the new "clear-and-hold" strategy possessed of a clearly defensive character.

Meanwhile public opinion continually assailed the U.S. imperialists whith an unanimous and firm demand for an unconditional halt to the bombing of North Viet Nam so that peace talks may be started going. Even Canada's Premier Trudeau raised his voice on May 14, 1968 to demand that the bombing cessation be "complete and not to the nine-tenths or three-fourths", and that it be the prerequisite for any fruitful talks. Many U.S. senators and politicians, many governments, among others those of Ethiopia, Sudan, Chad... joined the chorus. The July 1968 Grenoble World Conference of Lawyers attended by representatives of 40 countries expressed the viewpoint of top experts in international law condemning the U.S. war of aggression in Viet Nam as a crime and stressing that the first step to be taken by the Americans was to unconditionally stop the bombing of North Viet Nam.

It is under the weight of these immense difficulties in all fields, at home and abroad, that on Oct. 31, 1968, a few days before the presidential elections, President Johnson had to announce the unconditional halt of all bombardements against the DRVN. This decision, he said, was taken after consultations with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the C-in-C of U.S. forces in Viet Nam. The three presidential candidates as well as the congressional leaders of both parties were duly kept informed. In the same speech, Mr. Johnson disclosed that on Nov. 6, 1968, in Paris there would be convened a conference with the attendance of the DRVN, the U.S., the NFL, "in which the representatives of the Government of South Viet Nam are free to participate." The U.S. thus unequivocally accepted to talk

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PARIS QUADRIPARTITE CONFAB TO START ON JANUARY 18 AT A ROUND TABLE

(DRVN Delegation Press Communique)

THE delegation of the Government of the DRVN at the Paris conference on Viet Nam issued on Jan. 19 the following press communique:

"With the agreement of the delegation of the South Viet Nam National Front for Liberation, the delegation of the Government of the DRVN came to terms on Jan. 16, 1969 with the delegation of the Government of the United States on the following procedural points concerning the sitting arrangements and date of the first session of the Paris conference on Viet Nam:

"1 — The delegation of the Government of the DRVN, the delegation of the South Viet Nam NFL, the delegation of the Government of the United States and the delegation of the Saigon administration will sit at a solid and unsplit round table.

"The secretaries of the four delegations will sit at two small tables flanking the round table and away from it.

"The two delegations also have achieved agreement on other procedural matters concerning the first session of the conference.

"2 — The first session of the Paris conference on Viet Nam, with the participation of the representatives of the DRVN, the South Viet Nam NFL, the US and the Saigon administration, as mentioned above, will take place on Jan. 18, 1969, at 10.30hours at the International Conference Centre".

NORTH VIET NAM LOCAL ECONOMY CEASELESSLY GROWS

OVER the past four years the building and development of local economy has become a central economic task in the overall efforts to defeat the American aggressors and carry on socialist construction. During this period of time, besides long-term loans and investments in central branches, the State has made local investments equal to one and a half times those in the first five-year plan. For local industry, investments from 1965 to 1968 have increased four times compared with the period from 1961 to 1964.

Those investments have made it possible to build hundreds of water conservancy works and pumping stations serving agriculture, hundreds of stations for the selection of seeds, pig and fish strains, etc., and to equip agricultural cooperatives with thousands of tractors and about 6,500 small engineering workshops.

During this same period of time, it has been possible to build and commission over 1,000 State industrial enterprises and 2,600 handicraft cooperatives turning out capital and consumer goods for local level: mechanical engineering, mining, electricity, cement manufacturing, transport, chemical engineering, etc. Local mechanical engineering has been especially strengthened. In towns and cities, a broad network of mechanical engineering shops has come into being, down to cooperative level.

Parallel with agricultural and industrial development, the State has paid great attention to local branches of transport and communication. The past four years have seen the greatest expansion of local road networks and the greatest increase in the number of lorries, boats, motor launches, barges, etc. Almost all mountain districts, where traffic used to be difficult, have now built roads passable for cars and lorries.

This strengthening of the material basis has further consolidated the socialist production relations. More than 90% of labouring peasant households have joined the cooperatives; nearly 90% of the latter have become advance-type ones. They have become bases for organizing and mobilizing the masses for combat, production, and the building of a new life in the countryside. The division of labour therein has been made more rational.

Local mechanical engineering industry has also been responsible for the manufacting of bicycle parts, metal consumer goods, and machines used in other branches: agricultural produce processing, communications and transport, building industry, etc. On the basis of increased agricultural and industrial production, great efforts have been made towards improving the people's living standards. A normal life has been maintained for them even as the war is raging. School and college enrolment has been on the rise.

The successes recorded in production and improvement of the living standards have contributed to boasting the spirits of the people in all the provinces: they enthusiastically volunteer to serve the front and encourage their sons and younger brothers to enlist in the armed forces to fight against U.S. aggression.

OVER the past four years, there have been major changes in terms of intensive cultivation and yield rises. The number of cooperatives, villages and districts with annual rice yields of five tons per hectare and more (against 1.3 tons under the feudal and colonial regime) has been on the upgrade. For two successive years, the 5-ton banner has been held by Thai Binh province. The same achievement has been attained by half of Nam Ha province in the past year. Besides high-yield rice areas, a number of areas have been put under industrial crops. Many cooperatives have engaged in cattle breedings. This marks good progress in local agricultural production.

In industrial production, many new commodities have been turned out, adequately meeting the needs of agriculture, communication and transport and the people's life. In 1966, the value of local industrial and handicraft supplies for agriculture increased 27% compared with 1964; those for communications and transport, by 9%. By 1968, many provinces in the delta and the midlands have become self-sufficient in traditional tools and have produced large quantities of improved implements and agricultural machines. A number of mountain provinces, such as Yen Bai, Son La and others, which used to rely on the shops in the delta for their tools, have begun their own production of these. The provinces in the former Fourth Zone, in spite of fierce enemy raids, have nonetheless developed their local industry at a much faster rate than before the war. In Quang Binh province, where there was not an industrial undertaking to speak of in 1964, twenty enterprises have been commissioned and have been turning out goods for local consumption. The most substantial progress has been made in mechanical engineering. Aimed primarily at serving agriculture, this branch has been over the past four years making tools and machinery for the co-ops' workshops and helping them attain these three immediate targets: five tons of paddy per hectare per year (two crops), two pigs per cultivated hectare, and one hectare tilled per head of agricultural worker.

The Combatants' Mother

HARDLY had he reached home, back from the district induction centre, when Tan grimacingly and reprovingly said to his mother, "You've done nothing to put more flesh on me. Now I weigh one kilo less than required and am listed as unfit. That's your fault".

Mother Giang understood the feeling of her third son but fearing that he was really cross with her, she explained, "After all, you must know that I've not tried to keep you from going. You see, your two elder brothers, I myself insisted that the village and district authorities take them. When the country is at war, all young men should come forward to defend their country and their homes. In my heart of hearts I want all of you, boys, in the army. We have some chickens. You can feed yourself up on them, son."

At the next physical examination, Tan qualified. The day the young villagers, among them Tan, were sent off, Mother Giang, on behalf of the Association of Combatants' Mothers of village T. (Gia Lam district in the outskirts of Hanoi), told them they expected to hear of their feats soon.

All her three sons were fighting far away from home. She missed them very much but at no time had she shown any sign of sadness. The more she thought of her sons, the more heart she put in the village's work. Only in this way, she thought, could she do her bit, together with her sons, for an early victory over the aggressor and for a prompt family reunion.

She was to be seen at any place where an old woman above 60 could still do her share in the common work.

Upon learning that a unit was arriving in the village, even at a late hour in the night, she would leave her house with her pick. She knew that breast works should be built at once for the fighters to take up their combat positions in time. As old folks sleep little more often than not, they were the first to appear at the gun sites every morning. Together with Mother Giang, the other members of the Association of Combatants' Mothers took care of a wide range of jobs helpful to the armymen, from supplying drinking water to fetching material for the building of combat pits. They collected and washed rags for the armymen to clean their guns. Those days were the happiest for Mother Giang because she felt as if she was by the side of her own sons. Just as in other engagements, the day when the village militia brought down a U.S. plane on the very village rice-fields, Mother Giang and others carried drinking water to the battle-ground during the enemy bombing. When the neighbouring villages needed help to wipe out the bombing aftermaths, our old woman volunteered to join the women and the youth in the job. The armymen affectionately called her the political commissar of their unit.

Though only her youngest son, 15-year-old Hoa, who was still a pupil, was living with her, she managed to support her family by herself without the assistance of the co-op. She did some light work for the co-op, such as tending buffaloes, weeding, drying rice, etc... She could supply nearly 400 points annually and the earnings were enough to support both mother and son.

At the end of the year, she received congratulatory certificates, prizes and gifts for her many-sided activity: the credit co-operative presented her with a congratulatory certificate not only for having regularly deposited money in the Saving Funds, but also for having encouraged others to the same; the district Complementary Education Office gave her a prize in recognition of her effort to organize, together with the village women-folk, a "three responsibities" class while she herself asked Hoa to teach her; the military induction council presented her with a pocket-book and fountain pen for her active participation in its work.

Her daughter, Mrs. Tha, chairman of the co-op, had got married and had a home of her own. Each time she visited her mother, she often said reproachfully, "You're quite old, yet you busy yourself with more jobs than even young people can cope with. Won't you like to live till reunification day?"

"You fight the Yanks in your way", Mother Giang retorted, "Why should I not do it in my own? All right, I'm an old woman. But I can still do some minor work. That's the shortest road to national reunification". Then she pointed to Hoa, and added, "Your little brother is also eager to join up. In a few years, when he is draft-age and if the aggressors are still in the country, I'll let him go up like his elder brothers".

Seeing that his mother well read his thought, Hoa burst into a loud cheer. Mrs. Tha did not know what to say and burst into laughter herself.

U.S.-PUPPET CRIMES DENOUNCED TO WORLD BODIES

LAWYER Trinh Dinh Thao, former barrister of the Saigon Supreme Court, Chairman of the Central Committee of the South Viet Nam Alliance of National, Democratic and Peace Forces, sent on behalf of the lawyers in the Alliance, on Jan. 10 the following letter to the International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL):

"The U.S. aggressors and their henchmen, the Thieu-Ky-Huong clique, have conducted a series of kinapping operations against, and passed illegal sentences on, our South Vietnamese students and youths, frantically flouting all elementary principles of law and gravely undermining universal justice.

"The Saigon Special Military Court, a set-up with no legal basis, and condemned by the lawyers in the world, has unlawfully indicted many of our youths, students and pupils.

"Nguyen Dang Trung, Chairman of the Saigon Student's General Council, was sentenced to 10 years' hard labour; Nguyen Truong Con, a student, to 5 years' hard labour; Nguyen Thanh Cong, Chairman of the Saigon Student and Youth Committee for Refugees' Relief, to 3 years' imprisonment; Nguyen Van Luc, a 16-year-old pupil, was sentenced to death; Nguyen Van Tu, a student, was sentenced to 15 years' hard labour; Le Chi Cuong, a youth, was sentenced to life imprisonment; Vo Thi Thang, a school girl, was sentenced to 20 years' hard labour; Phung Ngoc Anh, a girl, was sentenced to life imprisonment, and Khong Que Minh, another girl, to 20 years' hard labour.

"On Dec. 27, the U.S. aggressors and the Thieu-Ky Huong clique kidnapped Huynh Quan Thu, a girl student and Secretary General of the Executive Committee of the Saigon Studenst' General Council, and Nguyen Minh Duc, a third-year student of the Saigon Normal College, on their way home.

"Once again, the so-called Saigon Special Military Court on Dec. 28 illegally convicted student Nguyen Duong Truong of the Saigon Normal College to 10 years', and pupil Nguyen Van Be, to 7 years' imprisonment.

"On Dec. 30, the Americans and their flunkeys kidnapped Dao thi Nguyet Thanh, a girl student of the Law Faculty, Secretary of the Committee for Refugees' Relief, a social organization of students and pupils in Saigon.

"They threatened to bring to the Special Military Court 29 patriots who, on the night of Dec. 24, took part in a demonstration for peace.

"The above-said acts prove that the U.S. agressors and their henchmen, the Thieu-Ky-Huong clique, now at the end of their tether, have been savagely challenging all elementary norms of civilization, law and justice of mankind.

"We eagerly call on the International Association of Democratic Lawyers and all lawyers in the world to raise their voices and to take positive steps to compel the US aggressors and their stooges to set free the Vietnamese patriots arbitrarily arrested and cancel all illegal sentences of the so-called Special Military Court."

OTHER messages were sent by Dr. Duong Quynh Hoa, deputy Secretary General of the Alliance, Mrs. Nguyen Dinh Chi, Vice-chairman of the Hue Branch of the Alliance, Mrs. Van Trang, deputy Secretary General of the Saigon—Cho Lon—Gia Dinh Branch of the Alliance, and by M. Ho Huu Nhat, M. Le Hieu Dang, M. Le Quang Ngoc and M. Tran Thien Tu, student representatives in the Alliance, respectively to the International Union of Women, to the International Federation of Women for Peace and Freedom and to the Permanent Bureau of the World Congress of Students and the International Union of Students to denounce the persecution and arrests of South Vietnamese patriots by the U.S. imperialists and the Saigon administration.

Pham Xuan Thai, President of the Trade Unions for Liberation, also sent a message to Tran Buu Kiem, head of the NFL Delegation to the Paris quadripartite conference, asking him to denounce to the French and world working class the big-scale campaign of terror undertaken by the Thieu-Ky-Huong triumvirate in Saigon, against those people who were only demanding peace and serious participation of the Saigon administration in the Paris quadripartite conference. The message in particular denounced the arrest by Saigon authorities of Nguyen Van Giau, Nguyen Van Giot and Truong Van Kham, three leading Trade Union officials in Saigon.

U.S. STEPS UP WAR ACTS AGAINST DRVN

THE U.S. aggressors last month increased their encroachments upon the sovereignty and threats against the security of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam and perpetrated more crimes against her people.

In its communique dated January 4 in this connection, the DRVN Commission for Investigation of U.S. Imperialists' War Crimes in Viet Nam reported:

In December 1968, American manned and unmanned planes made nearly 900 sorties and conducted nearly 700 reconnaissance flights over 24 provinces and towns of North Viet Nam which means nearly 300 sorties and nearly 200 flights more than in November.

According to initial figures, 650 recomnaissance missions were flown in the areas between the 17th and 19th parallels, namely 40 in Nghe An province, 160 in Ha Tinh province, 240 in Quang Binh province, and 210 in Vinh Linh area.

SR71 planes violated the airspace of Hanoi 7 times and Hai Phong 8 times.

The communique further denounced U.S. aerial bombing and strafing of many heavily populated areas in the DRVN. For instance, on December 9, 24 and 27 U.S. aircraft fired *Shrike* rockets on 3 villages of Nghi Loc district, Nghe An; on December 7, 2 F4s dropped 4 CBUs on 2 hamlets in Ha Tinh province, killing 10 peasants then working on the ricefields. On December 19, American planes fired 2 rockets on a village of the same province.

In Quang Binh province, U.S. planes on 30 occasions rained explosive, blast and steel-pellet bombs on 20 heavily populated villages on December 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 12 and 20.

On December 7, 4 F4s unleashed 8 explosive and blast bombs on Nghia Ninh village, killing 13 people mostly old folks, women and children, and reducing to ashes 15 houses.

Two days later, 2 other F4s dropped 4 explosive and steel-pellet bombs on Canh Duong village, killling 15 people in the ricefields.

On December 20, 2 planes of the same type scattered 8 steel-pellet bombs on a production team in Son Trach village, seriously wounding 3 people.

Besides, in the first four days of December, American planes on 7 occasions poured blast and steel-pellet bombs on a farm and 4 hamlets.

The communique further said that on December 3, 4, 5 and 13, warships of the 7 th Fleet and artillery based in the southern part of the Demilitarized zone slammed 130 shells on Vinh Linh.

The *New Jersey* on December 3 and 5 fired 12 406-mm shells on Vinh Son village in the northern part of the DMZ, causing serious losses to the people.

The communique stressed that the above acts of war against the DRVN constitute serious provocations against the Vietnamese people as well as the world's peoples as a whole, and the progressive people in the United States as well.

1968, A YEAR...

(Continued from page 2)

with the NFL and the press even displayed its impatience in a suggestion that a NFL envoy to any European country be sent to Paris to get the quadripartite conference going as darly as on Nov, 2, 1958.

The news of the unconditional end of U.S. bombardments against the DRVN was received — and rightly — as a major victory of the Vietnamese people and of peace-and justice-loving peoples throughout the world. This was a victory of a strategic value, since bombing of North Viet Nam was one of the four elements that made up the U.S. strategy as expounded by General Maxwell Taylor in his book "Responsibility and Reponse" (the three other elements were: land operations by U.S. and puppet forces in South Viet Nam; non-military efforts aimed at consolidating the puppet regime; and the so-called drive for peace). It will be remembered that in his book, M. Taylor took great pains making clear that these four element were interdependent and constituted a complex and coherent whole. Doesn't the cracking of the strategy in one of its component elements speed the collapse of the system in its entirety?

The decision which was forced on the U.S. only highlighted the soundness of DRVN positions. We had, at the very start, dismissed the U.S. "aggression against South Viet Nam by the North" thesis as absurd and we had been affirming and re-affirming that U.S. bombing of North Viet Nam being a gross violation of international norms, should be terminated simply and solely. We had also been emphasizing that no problem relating to South Viet Nam could achieve a valid solution without the participation of the NFL, the genuine representative of the 14 million South Vietnamese. Mr. Johnson seemed to have understood this, at least for a certain moment, when he accepted the NFL representation at the Paris quadripartite conference.

RENEWED OBDURACY AND LESSONS OF EXPERIENCE

A few days later, however the rulers in Washington reversed their opinions. They started saying that the Paris conference was only one of two parties and should meet around a table the shape of which would reflect the bilateral character of the parley.

This U.S. change of heart took place after a series of antics by Saigon puppets: "Senators" and "Representatives" staged demonstrations against the U.S. cessation of bombing; the big bosses in the military junta levelled scathing criticisms at the U.S. President and his Defence Secretary, etc... The traitors' chieftain Nguyen Van Thieu overtly explained that their "existence is at stake" if they should have to sit down to talk with the NFL in Paris. Commented *Wahington Post* in its Nov. 14, 1968 issue: "It ought to be quite clear that when Thieu says our existence is at stake what is meant is the existence of his government, not the existence of the South Vietnamese people or the integrity of the nation."

The comment was pertinent indeed, but it was doubtful whether Washington official circles saw its real meaning. What those rulers really have at heart was not the existence of the South Vietnamese people or the integrity of the Vietnamese nation, but only the maintaining in Saigon of a puppet regime on which they could place their last neo-colonialist hopes. In spite of all U.S. propaganda to the effect that the obstacles to the Paris conference were due to the Saigon administration, everyone knows that the U.S. rulers had endorsed Saigon's theses and since they ran the show, they must be the ones to be blamed mainly for the delay of the Paris conference.

In hindering a rapid settlement of the Viet Nam problem based on respect for the Vietnamese people's fundamental national rights, the men in Washington seemed to stake on the time factor — which would permit them to improve their positions in Viet Nam. But the team of LB Johnson, the outgoing President, must have gathered in this connection enough experiences in the year 1968 to pass them on to the Nixon team which is to take over in the first days of 1969. Such experiences may be put in a nutshell: "In Viet Nam, time does not work in favour of recalcitrant aggressors". Time indeed did not favour them when they obstinately refused to stop unconditionally the bombing of North Viet Nam. Time dit not favour them either when they laid all their hopes in the new policy of "de-Americanizing" the war and revamping the puppet army and administration: this army and this administration have been heading towards bankruptcy and total collapse!

AS the new year opens, the Vietnamese people are more than ever resolved to match with deeds the appeal of President Ho Chi Minh, their venerated leader:

"Let's fight so the Yankees quit and the puppets topple".

And they are aware that successes on the diplomatic front depend first of all upon their fighting!

EDITOR'S NOTE

This article was written before we received the information from Paris that the quadripartite conference would hold its first session on Jan. 18, 1969, with the four delegations (NFL, DRVN, USA and Saigon administration) sitting in seats of their choice around a plain round table, which implies equality between them. Thus once again U.S. obstinacy only resulted deplorably in the delay in the opening of the Conference while the DRVN and NFL realistic suggestion of a round table finally prevailed.

HOW A LARGE SCALE "ACCELERATED PACIFICATION" OPERATION FAILS SOUTH OF DA NANG?

AFTER the famous generalized offensives and populair uprisings in the Lunar New Year of 1968, the aggressors and traitors have been more than ever unsafe in Da Nang, a region where the ratio of one to three is said to have been achieved between the GIs and the Vietnamese civilians of all ages and both sexes not including a great number of puppet soldiers. The double security belt totalling nearly fifty kilometres of 150 metre-deep fortified worsk, equipped with most up-to-date detection devices, and defended by a most "skilfully" disposed fire power and large-scale raids on the city, has been unable to prevent PLAF staggering blows at the enemy's own hide-out, chiefly on the nights of August 22 and November 16, 1968.

In the second half of Nov. the U.S. Command decided to launch a large-scale "accelerated pacification" operation in the sector of Dien Ban district, about twenty kilometres south of the defence perimetre of Da Nang. A 7,000-strong military force composed mostly of GIs and South Korean mercenaries was unleashed against the villages near Vinh Dien, the district town. The enemy's target was to clear the area of all traces of guerillas and to put the local pupulation under a tight control. The operation was scheduled to have three stages. First, making use of huge means at its disposal, the enemy's command would unexpectedly lay a tight siege, like a large net surrounding a shoal of fish. Then, while it would close in with concentric attacks, the "fishes" would be caught with "landing nets" thrown by puppet troops sneaked inside the main net. When the catch was over it would be time for a triumphal return after having penned up the inhabitants into "protected zones".

Nevertheless the results fell far short of expectation. The GIs who served as the "net" progressed like in a ring, hand in hand. But they did not reckoned with the combativeness of the PLAF and the people. In the first days of the operation, they were soundly beaten by the people's forces. Thus, puppet units were badly mauled without their "allies" — who were stationed not far from there — daring to come to their rescue. As for the GIs, during our attacks, they preferred to play possum to avoid getting killed when the contact was inevitable. The regional PLAF and guerillas delivered the enemy devastating blows and foiled his plans. Thus from November 16 to 25, he suffered 466 casualties including 335 GIs, and lost 16 planes and helicopters downed and 4 military vehicles destroyed in various engagements taking place in four villages.

On the night of November 24, while the bulk of enemy forces was in the field, the people's forces, after daring and skilful actions, took Vinh Dien townlet which they had occupied for many hours eight days ago. The enemy garrison as well as local thugs were rendered harmless.

The following day, intercepting the enemy's rescue party supported by tanks and planes on the road to Hoi An, provincial capital, the patriotic forces put out of action 200 enemy troops including 35 GIs, burnt 2 armoured cars and downed a war plane.

Meanwhile, inspired by the enemy's command, Western agencies announced many times the oft-postponed "victorious" conclusion of the "catch". Towards the end of November, the operation proved a patent flop. There were signs that the enemy was contemplating a retreat in the first week of December. Then the PLAF launched a third attack on Vinh Dien and occupied it on the night of December 4.

On November 9, the enemy Command decided to put an end to the ill-fated large-scale "accelerated pacification" operation which fizzled out: 2,000 GIs, South Korean troops and Saigon soldiers were put out of action, about twenty aircraft shot down, many dozen tanks and other military vehicles destroyed, a great quantity of arms and ammunition and war materials seized by regional troops and guerillas within 24 days in a small sector not far from the "U.S. most powerful military base in South East Asia."

As epilogue of these American setbacks, let us add that on the night of December 16, a week after the abortive attempt, the PLAF attacked for the fourth time Vinh Dien and a strategic hamlet nearby, and helped the inhabitants shake of the enemy's yoke. Finally, four days later — the fifth time — Vinh Dien, the out-post on the southern front of Da Nang, was again occupied by the patriotic forces, which substantiated that the enemy had missed all his targets in that costly operation.

Such has been also the outcome of all similar operations launched of late by the enemy against the areas close to big towns, trunk communication lines and populated zones in order to be able to produce, when need be, a war map favourable — even though doctored — to secure a "position of strength" in a solution imposed by the *victory of the South Viet* Nam patriotic forces over the aggressors and their myrmidons.

South Viet Nam guerilla women back from a victorious combat.

"BIG RED ONE"'S MORALE SAGS

THE morale crisis in the U.S. armed forces in South Viet Nam does not even spare the Big Red One, 1st Infantry Division, *GPA* reported.

A practice with this division: when marching order are given, GIs sham sickness, or run away to Saigon. A defector of the unit quoted American Military Police sources as disclosing that as many as 570 of its men had deserted in the first half of 1968, and that most of the time there were about 1,000 GIs detained at the "LBJ" (Long Binh Jail) camp for insubordination.

Since the beginning of the current wave of PLAF offensives early ast year, growing numbers of GIs of the 1st Infantry Division have resisted orders and demanded repatriation. Following are typical cases at the division's Lai Khe base camp:

— 600 GIs in Feb, 1968 refused to go into action. An insurgent lieutenant shot dead a captain and later took his own life.

— On Feb. 20, another lieutenant, out of sympathy with discontented soldiers, wounded a captain and was slain by the latter. The captain himself committed suicide afterwards.

— A whole company on May 9 refused to go to the rescue of their mates in Phu Hoa Dong area. To the intervention by MPs, they put up a stiff resistance. Many of the mutineers were savagely beaten, and 45 were removed to Bien Hoa province.

— 48 GIs, whose terms had expired, demanded on May to their repatriation, but were ruthlessly repressed. Out of despair, 7 of them committed suicide.

— 70 GIs refused on June 12 to board planes bound for an operation. When forced to do so, they smashed the doors and jumped down. The next day another 138 GIs mutinied. 2 of them were shot dead by their C.O.s and the rest removed to another place.

— A mutiny involving a whole battalion broke out Sept. 26. Seven of the GIs were arrested and beaten up.

Despite strict preventive measures, more and more troops of the "Big Red One" are seeking the truth about the NFL. A number of them have contacted local people to make sure whether the NFL would receive them. Leaflets of the Front are being carefully studied and concealed by troops of the division.

At the announcement of the cessation of U.S. bombardments on North Viet Nam, many GIs went on a drinking and dancing spree in anticipation of the day when at last they could get out of the South Viet Nam hell.

DANISH COMMUNIST PARTY DELEGATION VISITS VIET NAM

AT the invitation of the Central Committee of the Viet Nam Workers' Party, the Delegation of the Danish Communist Party led by its Chairman, Comrade Knud Jespersen, visited the DRVN from Jan. 6 to 13, 1969. It also included comrade Gunnar Kanstrup, member of the Political Bureau of the CC and Chairman of the Danish Communist Youth Union, and Erley Oslen, journalist.

During its stay in Viet Nam, it toured a number of industrial, agricultural and cultural establishments, a number of army units, called on the leadership of the Viet Nam Federation of Trade Unions and the Central Committee of the Viet Nam Working Youth Unions and went to the Haiphong port city. Wherever it went, it was given a very warm welcome by our cadres and people.

The delegation also paid a call at the Permanent Representation of the South Viet Nam National Front for Liberation in the North.

President Ho Chi Minh received, and had a cordial interview with, Chairman Knud Jespersen and the other members of the Delegation.

The Delegation of the Viet Nam Workers' Party led by Comrade Le Duan, first Secretary of the Party Central Committee, and the Delegation of the Danish Communist Party led by Comrade Knud Jespersen, Party Chairman, held talks in a cordial and friendly atmosphere.

A communique on the visit of the Delegation of the Danish Communist Party to the DRVN was made public at the end of the conversations. It said:

"The Delegation of the Danish Communist Party warmly hailed the glorious victories of the people and armed forces in the two zones of Viet Nam, and expressed its admiration for the heroism of the entire Vietnamese people in their resistance war against U.S. aggression, for national salvation. Fighting in the forefront of the common struggle of the world's peoples against U.S.-headed imperialism, the Vietnamese people are setting a brilliant example of indomitable struggle and *determination to defeat the imperialist* aggressors. Their great victories constitute an important contribution to the struggle for peace, national independence, democracy and socialism throughout the world. That is the reason why the just struggle of the Vietnamese people enjoys ever stronger sympathy and support from the socialist camp and the progressive people in the world, including those in the United States.

"The Delegation of the Danish Communist Party voiced full support to the heroic Vietnamese people's struggle against U.S. aggression, for national salvation, to the 4 points of the DRVN, the Political Programme and the 5 points of the South Viet Nam NFL on a political settlement of the South Viet Nam problem, to the just position and the goodwill attitude of the DRVN Government and the South Viet Nam NFL at the Paris Conference.

"The Delegation entertained a firm belief in the final victory of the Vietnamese people who, with their own invincible forces and with the great support of the socialist countries and of the progressive people in the world, are successfully forging ahead in the struggle against U.S. aggression, for their genuine national independence and freedom, and for the fulfilment of their lofty internationalist duty.

"On behalf of the Viet Nam Workers' Party, and the Vietnamese working class and people, the Delegation of the Viet Nam Workers' Party expressed its gratitude to the Communist Party, the working class, all social strata, organizations, and democratic and progressive personalities of Denmark which have been giving support to the Vietnamese people's struggle against U.S. agression, for national salvation. This valuable support is a fine demonstration of proletarian internationalism and of the solidarity and friendship between the Vietnamese and Danish parties, working classes and peoples. It is an encouragement for the Vietnamese people who are dashing forward, impelled by their successes, toward total victory...

"The Delegation of the Viet Nam Workers' Party gave its full support to the struggle waged by the Danish and other Scandinavian peoples against the U.S. — headed aggressive NATO bloc, for the withdrawal of Denmark from that bloc so as to ensure a lasting peace in Scandinavia, as a contribution to the common struggle for peace, national independence, democracy and socialism in the world.

"The Danish Delegation wished to express its profound gratitude for the privilege of this visit, which inspires the Danish Communist Party to further step up the Danish movement of solidarity with the valiant Vietnamese people and for the establishment of normal and friendly relations between the DRVN and Denmark."

SWEDEN AND THE MOVEMENT IN SUPPORT OF VIET NAM AGAINST U. S. AGGRESSION

FOLLOWING the Swedish Government's agreement to the establishment by the South Viet Nam NFL of its Information Bureau in Stockholm on October 1968, on Jan. 10, 1969, the Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of Sweden, Torsten Nilsson, sent a note to his DRVN counter-part Nguyen Duy Trinh proposing the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. These memorable events were high peaks in the Swedish people's movement in support of Viet Nam's anti-U.S. resistance war.

"SUPPORT VIET NAM" ORGANIZATIONS SET UP ALL OVER THE COUNTRY

IN 1965, when inquired of by a Vietnamese woman about Sweden's Support-Viet Nam movement, the visiting Swedish woman writer, Sary Lidman, answered with a smile, "The impressions are fine. The movement is strengthening and developing with every passing day". In 1968, in Hanoi, answering a similar question, well-known Swedish playwright Peter Weiss and his wife, architect Gunilla Palmstier, enthusiastically said, "It is safe to say that in our country many 'Support the Vietnamese people in their anti-U.S. fight for national salvation' organizations can be found practically in all localities. Viet Nam is struggling not only for her own independence and freedom but also for the interest of peace and of the national liberation cause".

The Swedish people indeed hold Viet Nam in esteem and affection. In 1965 when U.S. Marine units landed in South Viet Nam and strings of U.S. bombs rained over Quang Binh and Vinh Linh, just North of the 17th parallel, angry protests against the aggressors were heard in Sweden.

Swedish CP Chairman Harmamsson devoted a part of his activities to giving lectures in which he brought home to the Swedish people the unjust nature of the U.S. war in Viet Nam and at the same time stimulated the movement in support of Viet Nam's fight against U.S. aggression for national salvation, which was on the upgrade in Sweden. In the paper **Ny Dag** appeared many articles by John Takmann denouncing U.S. crimes in Viet Nam. The first meeting of Swedish youth and students in support of the Vietnamese people was held in 1964 under the auspices of the Swedish Young Communist League.

The working class, peace militants, intellectuals and especially the youth, school-pupils and students of Sweden have set up many "Support-Viet Nam" organizations. Groups called **NFL** are found in various districts and provinces. Of late, a number of young philosophers has founded a new organization called **Young Philosophers' Support-Viet Nam Group**". They visited universities where they gave lectures on Viet Nam's anti-U.S. fight and published the **Kommentar**, magazine to acquaint the Swedish people with the dual aspect of life in Viet Nam — production and the fighting. In May 1967 when the **Bertrand Russell International Tribunal to Try the U.S. Imperialists' Crimes in Viet Nam** held its first session in Stockholm, an organization called **"Swedish Tribunal Committee"** was set up to support and assist the B. Russel International Tribunal in the accomplishment of its task.

The **Swedish Support — Viet Nam Committee** which came into existence in 1967, is one of the biggest organizations with a membership of over 500,000 and more than 30 affiliated organs representing various political parties and trade union, peace, youth and religious bodies throughout the country.

Swedish journalist Erik Eriksson who visited Viet Nam in Dec. 1968 had this to say: "If I am asked to give all the names of 'support-Viet Nam Committees' in my country, I'm afraid I can't. There are so many of them, you know!" As a matter of fact, anti-U.S. rallies and demonstrations have so far been staged in 50 Swedish cities and there are in the country 70 organizations supporting the just struggle of the Vietnamese people. Most remarkable was the demonstration in Stockholm early in 1968, with DRVN Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Nguyen Tho Chan, and Swedish Minister of Education, Olof Palme, leading the marchers through the streets.

RIGHTEOUS WORDS AND DEEDS

IT is impossible to mention all the multifaceted activities and diversified forms of support and assistance initiated by the Swedish people for the fight of the Vietnamese people. From collection drives, press campaigns in support of Viet Nam, mass rallies and street demonstrations, etc... the Swedish people have brought the movement to a climax: they have urged the Royal Government to severe relations with the Saigon puppet administration, establish relations with the NFL, and recognize, and establish diplomatic relations with, the DRVN. The Swedish people have shown great zeal and resourcefulness in this respect. Workers contribute part of their wages. Youth and students volunteer to sell books and papers to feed the *"Viet Nam Funds."* Nice kit-bags containing mobile medical instruments presented by the Committee for Medical Aid to Viet Nam have reached Vietnamese physicians at various fronts. Writings extolling the just struggle of the Vietnamese people and condemning U.S. imperialist aggression have been published in book forms or in newspapers. Many writers, journalists, artists and philosophers including J. Takman, Sary Lidman, Gunnar Myrdal, Victor Vinde, Gunilla Palmastier, Peter Weiss and Erik Eriksson, have put their sharp pens and vexatious words at the service of fighting Viet Nam. Recently, on Dec. 9, 1968, Le Phuong, Director of the NFL Information Bureau in Stockholm, received a letter from the Swedish Social-Democratic Party (the ruling party) informing him that a sum of 75,000 kronas collected by the Party had been sent to the heroic South Vietnamese people.

The Swedish Government has on many occasions made plain its sensible attitude and views concerning the Viet Nam problem. Its consent to the holding in Stockholm of the Bertrand Russell International Tribunal to try the U.S. imperialists' Crimes in Viet Nam (May 1967), its granting of asylum in Sweden to anti-draft and war-resisting GIs, its bringing to a standstill its diplomatic relations with the Saigon Administration (1967), its support for the NFL Political Programme, its demand for an unconditional cessation of U.S. bombing against the DRVN (statement of the Government on March 21, 1968), its invitation to Ambassador Nguyen Tho Chan, special envoy of the DRVN Government, to visit Sweden (1968), etc... were signs of a deep sense of justice.

On Dec. 12, 1968, during a reception given to Prof. Hoang Minh Giam, head of the Viet Nam Peace delegation to the International Consultative Conference on Viet Nam in Stockholm, Swedish Foreign Minister Torsten Nilsson reaffirmed his government and people's unflagging interest in, and support for, the valiant struggle of the Vietnamese people for independence and national liberation.

The decision of the Swedish Government to establish diplomatic relations with the DRVN has been warmly acclaimed in many countries. The Danish, Austrian, Norwegian and Finnish press described it as an event of important international significance. Mr. Raatikainen, Secretary of the Social Democratic Party of Finland, has stated, "The recognition by Sweden of the DRVN is praiseworthy. It is a contribution to the strengthening of peace and security on the globe".

The U.S. imperialists resent Sweden's disagreement with them on many international issues, especially on the Viet Nam problem. Early in 1968, following the demonstration in Stockholm in which participated the Swedish Minister of Education, White House rulers recalled the U.S. Ambassdor to Sweden in "retaliation". They have stopped at nothing to influence Sweden's sound policy of peace and neutrality. They have been insisting that Sweeden remain "neutral" in their own way, that is, shut her eyes to their criminal activities. The Swedish people, however, have always and firmly been listening to the voice of their conscience. Prime Minister Tage Erlander's statement in reply to Washington rulers that "neutrality does not mean silence" demonstrates the firmness, pride and self-confidence of a sovereign and conscientious nation unwilling to submit to threat and to remain indifferent to injustice and brutality.

The people of both North and South Viet Nam who are fighting relentlessly against the U.S. aggressors in defence of their independence and freedom treasure, and are grateful for the noble and wholehearted international support of friends in all 5 continents, and of the Swedish people. As Premier Pham Van Dong put it, "The international anti-U.S. movement in support of the Vietnamese people incontestably will lead to the struggle against U.S. imperialism everywhere in the world and this struggle will assume ever more resolute and vigorous forms".

The Vietnamese people are convinced that the Swedish people will obtain new successes in the struggle against the common enemy of all nations: U.S. imperialism.

VIET NAM AND THE WORLD

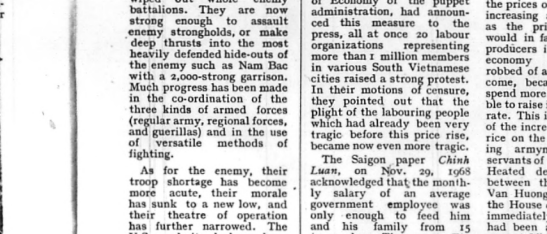
LAO PATRIOTS' BRILLIANT VICTORIES IN 1968

IN 1968 the Lao patriotic armed forces and people foiled all crafty manoeuvres and war efforts of the U.S.-puppets, and won unprecedented victories, *Khaosan Pathet Lao* (Pathet Lao News Agency) said.

In a sum-up of the military situation in Laos in 1968, the agency said:

According to still incomplete statistics fom January 1st to December 20, 1968, the Lao patriotic armed forces fought 1,460 battles, putting out of action more than 20,000 enemy troops including many U.S., Thai and South Viet Nam" advisers" and military personnel of U.S. satellites countries; seizing over 6,300 weapons of various kinds including hundreds of mortars, cannons and recoilless guns; destroying 72 military vehicles; sinking 44 vessels and motor boats. They shot down or wrecked on the ground 170 U.S. aircraft, and destroyed or damaged many enemy bridges, storages, logistical bases, airfields, artillery sites, and radar installations.

In terms of units, nearly two enemy regiments were wiped out, 10 battalions heavily decimated, and 32 other battalions disbanded.



Swedish people in Stockholm demonstrate against U.S. war of aggression in Viet Nam

As compared with 1967, the number of enemy troops put out of action increased by 30 per cent, that taken prisoner by 7 times, and that of defectors by 2.5 times; the number of mutinous officers and soldiers in the rightist army rose twofold; the quantity of weapons and war material captured doubled, and the number of enemy battalions entirely wiped out quadrupled.

The enemy manpower losses represented more than one third of total strength of the U.S.-fostered rightist army in Laos.

These big victories, *KPL* went on, are of an extremely important strategic significance, since they were recorded at time when the U.S. imperialists and their hirelings were taking their war efforts to a very high level, putting to use many kinds of modern weapons and war means.

They attest to the unprecedented, all-sided growth of the Lao People's Liberation Army and the Lao Patriotic Neutralist Forces. On many occasions, the patriotic forces wiped out whole enemy battalions. They are now strong enough to assault enemy strongholds, or make deep thrusts into the most heavily defended hide-outs of the enemy such as Nam Bac with a 2,000-strong garrison. Much progress has been made in the co-ordination of the three kinds of armed forces (regular army, regional forces, and guerillas) and in the use of versatile methods of fighting.

As for the enemy, their troop shortage has become more acute, their morale has sunk to a new low, and their theatre of operation has further narrowed. The U.S. and its lackeys have been driven onto the defensive on all the battlefields in Laos. Very favourable conditions have been created for the Lao people to build more solid bases throughout the country and to achieve still bigger victories in 1969.

RICE PRICE RISE, A SAIGON PUPPET REGIME'S ACT OF DAYLIGHT ROBBERY

PHAM THANH VINH

RECENTLY, the Saigon puppet administration unwarrantedly decided to cut by 50 per cent the bonus given to the import of U.S. rice. As a result, the price of rice was officially increased on an average by 400 piastres per 100 kilos.

The Saigon Minister of Economy claimed that such a decision had been taken to help 8 million peasants increase production. It had also been described as a move to curb inflation and avoid a currency devaluation. What is the truth?

Assuming the Saigon puppet administration's claimed concern for the 8 million peasants was real, then did it show any for the labouring people in cities and towns, armymen and public servants, and the other urban people in general, when it raised the price of rice? As these people have to buy imported U.S. rice, when their salaries and other sources of their income remain frozen, they certainly will experience a hard time because of dearer rice.

It was for this reason that after Au Ngoc Tho, Minister of Economy of the puppet administration, had announced this measure to the press, all at once 20 labour organizations representing more than 1 million members in various South Vietnamese cities raised a strong protest. In their motions of censure, they pointed out that the plight of the labouring people which had already been very tragic before this price rise, became now even more tragic.

The Saigon paper *Chinh Luan* on Nov. 1968 acknowledged that the monthly salary of an average government employee was only enough to feed him and his family from 15 to 20 days. The paper *Tin Sang*, on Nov. 28, 1968 described the general mood of the people in face of this measure as follows, "The news of the increase of the price of rice by 400 piastres per 100 kilos came as a shock to men and women, young and old alike, to the labouring people, goverment employees, armymen, etc... all caught by surprise as if a disaster was imminent..." That is true, because rice is the staple food of the Vietnamese and spending on rice is an important item in the family budget of the labouring people. What is more, since rice is the first-neccessity food of the entire people, the rise in its price will certainly send skyrocketing the prices of other foodsfuffs and of locally-made goods in general. If for some reasons the puppet administration applied special measures to keep, to some extent, the prices of other goods from increasing at the same rate as the price of rice, this would in fact mean that the producers in the branches of economy concerned were robbed of a part of their income, because they had to spend more while being unable to raise income at the same rate. This is the ill-effects of the increase of the price of rice on the townfolks including armymen and puplic servants of the puppet regime. Heated debates took place between the so-called Tran Van Huong government and the House of Representatives immediately after the measure had been announced by the puppet Ministry of Economy. Vo Van Phat, chairman of the House Economic Commission, had to say that "strong protest" would be made against this decision and to acknowledge that "with the current price of rice (i. e. before the ncrease) the people already had hard times". Phat openly blamed this state of things on the "dependence of the balance of expenditure on the U.S." and called for "an independent economic policy".

As far as the peasants are concerned, does this measure really bring them anything good? It is an open secret that even in the areas still under U.S.-puppet control which are now confined mainly to cities and towns and along some communication axes people have been rising up and have been since last Tet, dealing deadly and repeated blows at the enemy's nerve organs. As the peasants are now living out of the control of the puppet administration, the increase of the price of rice in the cities and towns has no other aim than to siphon out the rice produced by the peasants. In fact, the fundamental thing to encourage production among peasants lies first and foremost in concrete steps designed to aid agriculture, above all the termination of the war of destruction with the use of bombs and shells, toxic chemicals and sweeps, which has been day and night ravaging vast rural areas the U.S. and its puppets term as the base of the South Viet Nam NFL. *It is quite absurb* of the U.S. and its puppets to talk about helping the peasants in production while they are importing U.S. rice en masse into South Viet Nam (800,000 tons in 1968 alone and approximately the same figure — 700,000 tons — planned for 1969).

For a country whose economy still bears an agricultural character with rice production as its main business, what incentive are they bringing to peasants in production with the import of so huge an amount of rice? Therefore, the puppet administration's claim that the increase of the price of rice is designed to encourage 8 million peasants to boost production is merely a bluff.

This administration has also claimed that this measure is aimed at curbing inflation and preventing a currency devaluation. In reality, its currency has the only prop, namely, the anti-popular, anti-national regime backed by U.S. bayonets, bombs and shells. Since the U.S. imperialists widened the local war into a direct aggression against South Viet Nam with a half a million-strong army, the war budget of the Saigon puppet administration has been spiralling visibly. In 1961 it was 16,5 billion piastres. In 1965, the first year of the U.S. local war, it went up to 46,5 billion. The figure was 111 billion in 1968 and is expected to hit the 130-billion mark in 1969. Meanwhile, production in South Viet Nam, agricultural and industrial, has been badly hurt. The main source of income of the puppet regime can but rely partly on U.S. aid in term of imported U.S. goods and chiefly on currency inflation to meet the cost of war. In 1965, the first year of the U.S. local war in South Viet Nam, the inflationary trend was up with an additional 22 billion piastres. In 1968, it ran to 50 billion, which figure has also been foreseen for 1969. To increase the price of rice to spare 2 billion for combating an inflation which has already reached such a proportion is only a cynical farce. In fact, it is sheer daylight robbery against the entire people in South Viet Nam.

ON THE LARGE SOUTHERN FRONT

MILITARY OPERATIONS

THE Saigon front still hit the headlines during this week in reports on the fighting in South Viet Nam. Meanwhile the vast, fertile and populated Mekong Delta also is given prominence by bold successfull actions conducted mostly in My Tho province, more than 40km South-Southwest of Saigon.

SAIGON FRONT

— 4 ambushes in 3 days in the Hon Quan area: 43 military vehicles destroyed and 6 enemy companies put out of action or decimated.

— A company of the First Cavalry wiped out and another decimated in the Tay Ninh sector.

— 13 U.S. vessels (including several 10,000-12,000-ton freighters) burnt or damaged.

A series of 4 ambushes were successfully laid by the PLAF against enemy road convoys in Binh Long provinces, at different points not far from **Hon Quan**, a provincial capital 96km North of Saigon, *Giai Phong* Press Agency reported.

On Jan. 8, a 28-vehicle convoy comprising 7 tanks, 20 military trucks and a jeep was completely destroyed North of the city while 3 helicopters sent in to its rescue were brought down by the patriots. Next morning, at another point, the latter intercepted a U.S. armoured column, destroying 5 of its tanks and M. 111 armoured troop carriers. All told, the enemy lost in these two days 2 U.S. and 2 puppet companies put out of action. The following day, Jan. 11, again on Route No 13, a mixed U.S.-puppet battalion ran into an ambush and had one company wiped out and another decimated. The same day, South of Hon Quan, 10 vehicles of a column heading for this city were destroyed in a 4th ambush.

Further West, in **Tay Ninh** province, the PLAF won two battles on Jan. 7. While the GI's were being landed by helicopters at **Bau Son**, West-Southwest of the provincial capital, the PLAF mounted a surprise attack on them and decimated one of their companies. When enemy reinforcements arrived at the scene, the patriots immediately sprang into action and engaged them in heavy fighting, put out of action a U.S. company and shot down 7 helicopters loaded with GI's. At the same time, mid-way between Tay Ninh and Saigon near **Trang Bang**, in a 15-minute battle, regional troops of the PLAF killed or wounded 80 GI's freshly landed by helicopters.

It is further reported by Western new agencies that during the past week, other bloody ambushes for the U.S.-puppet forces were set by the patriots on Jan. 14 and Jan. 15 around **Tay Ninh** and on Jan. 10 near **Ba Ra**, another provincial capital 44km East-Northeast of Hon Quan. The same sources reported a series of poundings against various U.S.-puppet positions: on the night of Jan. 8, a base of the U.S. 25th Infantry Division at **Dau Tieng** (64km Northwest of Saigon) and a position at **Lai Thieu** (12km North of Saigon); on the night of Jan. 10, the An Loc helicopter parking ground near Hon Quan and an operational CP 35 km West of Saigon received 40km and 100 shells respectively.

The PLAF attacks on enemy waterways also inflicted serious losses on the U.S.-puppet forces. Below Saigon, 4 cargo ships from 10,000 to 12,000 tons and 3 war vessels were burnt or heavily damaged on Jan. 2, 3, 5, 7 and 9 while on the Oriental Vam Co river, Northwest of Saigon, 6 smaller vessels were sent to the bottom on Jan. 5 and Jan. 10.

MEKONG DELTA

— Heavy enemy losses during PLAF attacks against 3 provincial capitals in one night.

— At least 34 helicopters destroyed by the patriots' artillery fire on 2 airfields, one of them subjected to 3 successive attacks.

— 3 companies (one American) put out of action within 10 days.

— Intensive poundings of enemy CP's and bases.

THE PLAF were particularly active in the province of My Tho, especially along Highway No 4 running through the province to link the rich rice-growing provinces to Saigon. On the night of Jan. 10 to 11, they struck at many military targets in **My Tho** city (including the HQ puppet Division 7 and a military training centre, one of the country's most important), the U.S. base at **Binh Duc**, the HQ of the U.S. 9th Infantry Division 5 km West of the city with its helicopter parking field where 10 engines were destroyed (according to Western reports) and 3 military sub-sector HQ's. Meanwhile, local people rose up, hunting down traitors, erecting road blocks or flying NFL flags on roofs and walls, etc...

At the same time, respectively 65 km Northwest and 80 km West of My Tho, similar incidents took place in **Moc Hoa** and **Cao Lanh**, two other provincial capitals where the enemy also sustained heavy losses.

Engaging the enemy involved in "pacification" along Highway No. 4, regional people's forces of My Tho province violently assaulted a U.S. company encamped at Hau Thanh (50km Southwest of Saigon) completely wiping it out after having killed or wounded more than 100 GI's, occupied the camp and seized many weapons. Meanwhile, guerillas blew up an important road bridge mid-way between this area and My Tho city and cut Highway No 14.

Artillery shelling against military bases was intensified substantially in this area, especially on the nights of Jan. 9, 10, 12, 13 and 14. The **Binh Duc** base (already mentioned) came under fire 3 times, losing in all 16 helicopters destroyed including that of the 2-star general commanding the U.S. 9th Division. 18 other engines were put out of action on an airfield near **Can Tho** city (the biggest in the Mekong Delta, 130 km Southwest of Saigon) which was shelled twice on Jan. 13 and 14. The **Soc Trang** airfield, the HQ of puppet Division 25, 2 military sector HQ's and 1 sub-sector HQ, etc.., were also bombarded.

In the **Plain of Reeds**, village guerillas on Jan. 6 intercepted an enemy flotilla of 3 vessels on the Oriental Vam Co river, sinking 2 vessels along with 2 platoons of GI's on board and burning the 3rd.

In the southernmost peninsula of the country where a large-scale "accelerated pacification" operation was in progress, regional armed forces of **Ca Mau** province, between Dec. 22, 1968 and early Jan. 1969 inflicted more than 300 casualties, shot down 3 choppers and sank or damaged 6 vessels, while those of **Rach Gia** province destroyed puppet company 186 at **Cat Moi**, near the Gulf of Thailand on the night of Jan 2.

OTHER SECTORS

— 200 puppet troops killed or wounded Northwest of Pleiku.

— 2 puppet companies put out of action Northeast of Phan Thiet.

— Heavy mortaring of enemy bases in Kontum, Pleiku, Buon Me Thuot, Duc Lap and Quang Ngai.

ON the **Western Highlands**, Northeast of Saigon, the PLAF hit hard at puppet troops in the **Chu Pha** area, 38km Northwest of Pleiku and killed or wounded 200 adverse troops, shot down 3 choppers and destroyed 2 heavy mortars between Jan. 10 and Jan. 14. On Jan. 7, a violent attack was launched against the newly-established post of **Sar Pa**, near Duc Lap and 200km Northeast of Saigon, causing heavy losses in men and material.

In **Southern Trung Bo**, near **Hoa Da** district, 58km Northeast of Phan Thiet and 200km East-Northeast of Saigon, the PLAF intercepted a puppet company, putting 30 of its men out of action. Beating off enemy reinforcements, they destroyed 2 of the 3 companies moved in to rescue the battered company, wrecked 3 vehicles and downed 3 copters.

In the **Da Nang sector**, an operation conducted by puppet troops against 2 villages of **Dai Loc** district some 30km Southwest of this city, is reported to have ended with 120 puppet rangers killed or wounded by guerillas.

As in the Mekong Delta, Liberation gunners were very active. They scored direct hits at the airfields of **Kontum** and **Buon Me Thuot** (night of Jan. 8 to Jan. 9) of **Quang Ngai** (night of Jan. 9 to Jan. 10) of **Pleiku** and the H.Q. of the U.S. 4th Infantry division in this city (night of Jan. 15 to Jan. 16), the H.Q.'s of the sub-sectors of **Duc Lap** and **Buon Ho** (night of Jan. 13 to Jan. 14) etc...

Men in South Viet Nam liberated zone

A VETERAN MODEL FARMER

OLD Bay Than lives at Dat Chay hamlet, Phong Lac village, Ca Mau province. He is now 63 years old. At this age, he is entitled to a well-deserved rest but at no time he has given it a thought.

His family and his whole life are closely associated with the Revolution. Six of his children who have come of age either work at public offices or serve in the People's Liberation armed forces. His youngest son, aged 13, lives with him but insistently asks to serve as a messenger boy.

In his long life, he has seen two successive Resistance wars. A cadre of the Peasant Association now, he sticks to the ricefields and enthusiastically comes forward for any revolutionary job, although well advanced in years and weak. He always sets good examples as an activist in community affairs, accomplishing the assigned tasks and keeping in close touch with everybody in the hamlet to encourage people to step up production, the fighting and service to the front. Every year, his family contributed from 3 to 4 tons of paddy to the Revolution fund. Early this year, he volunteered to give an extra 2 tons and offered a loan of 10,000 "dong" to the NFL to help finance the generalized attacks.

His bamboo grove which was closely associated with him and his co-villagers during the first days of South Viet Nam Resistance 23 years ago when, carrying flags and armed with sticks and spears, bows and arrows, they rose up in a powerful insurrection, punished traitors in Phong Lac and swarmed into Ca Mau city, he now gives it to the community to supply material for the making of spikes and booby traps and the building of their village into a fighting one to resist the U.S. aggressors and help needy families build their homes. His family alone has made nearly 10,000 bamboo spikes to help fortify the village in prevention against enemy counter-attacks.

"Ricefields are battlefronts,

Ploughs and spades are weapons,

Peasants are combatants,

The rear line competes with the front."

Keeping in mind these lines dedicated to the peasants by President Ho Chi Minh in the early days of the anti-French Resistance, he himself tries hard and urges others put them into practice on the agricultural production front to get as much grain and food as possible for the growing needs of the Revolution. His most outstanding achievement has been higher yields through intensive cultivation. His two low-lying hectares of land formerly produced from 1.2 to 1.4 tons of paddy per hectare at most. Thanks to his care and his efforts to improve the soil, each hectare now brings in as much as 4.8 tons per year, or a 3-fold increase. He has sunk canals and erected dams to develop hydraulics and as a result, in the first year, he was able to reap about 12 tons of paddy from his 2 hectares of land. Following his experiences, other peasants in the hamlet have also obtained higher productivity. Old Tu Tuong for example has raised his yield to 6 tons per hectare per annum.

While busying himself with improving farm technique, our old man also is very active weeding and rat-catching, and always does the manuring and planting at appropriate time. Everybody benefits from his experiences. Twice this year, at the beginning of the 4th and in the middle of the 7th lunar month, the whole hamlet set out to make war on rats which are no longer a threat to crops.

At the First Western Nam Bo Congress of Model Farmers early this year, old Bay Than received a Liberation Order Third Class from the NFL Committee of the area.